

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS NIACT IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IS

SUBJECT:BRIEFING FOR RABIN VISIT

BRUSSELS PASS EYES ONLY TO DEP. ASS'T. SEC'Y SANNDPRS

1.FOLLOWING IS DRAFT AND UNCLEARED BACKGROUND PORTION OF
SEC-PRES MEMO FOR RABIN VISIT PER YOUR REQUEST. BEGIN
TEXT. RABIN IS COMING TO WASHINGTON AS A LEADER MORE
FIRMLY IN CHARGE IN HIS PARTY, AND MORE POPULAR WITH HIS
PEOPLE, THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME SINCE HE TOOK OFFICE ONE
YEAR AGO. ISRAEL'S REFUSAL TO CONCLUDE ANOTHER AGREEMENT
WITH EGYPT IN MARCH WAS RECEIVED BY MOST ISRAELIS AS
EVIDENCE THAT RABIN IS A STRONG PRIME MINISTER, SURE OF
HIS GOALS AND UNRESPONSIVE TO PRESSURES AND THREATS,
WHETHER FROM ENEMIES OR FRIENDS. RABIN CAPITALIZED ON
THIS REACTION TO THE SUSPENSION OF NEGOTIATIONS AND, IN
MOST ISRAELIS' EYES, HAS MOVED SINCE THEN TO DEMONSTRATE
NOT ONLY THAT ISRAEL'S POSITIONS WERE THE RIGHT ONES BUT
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ALSO THAT HIS TACTICS WILL MOVE BOTH THE U.S. AND THE
PEACE PROCESS IN THE DIRECTION ISRAEL DESIRES - TOWARD
A RENEWAL OF SOLID US-ISRAELI TIES AND NEGOTIATIONS AIMED
AT NO MORE THAN AN INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT WHICH

WOULD LAST FOR 3-5 YEARS.

2. FOR ISRAELIS, THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT SIGN OF THE SUCCESS OF RABIN'S STANCE SINCE MARCH, PARTICULARLY HIS HANDLING OF OUR POLICY REASSESSMENT, WAS THE LETTER TO YOU SIGNED BY THREE-QUARTERS OF THE SENATE. THE LETTER WAS SEEN IN ISRAEL AS A MAJOR EVENT, AND IT EVOKED A EUPHORIC REACTION, CONVINCING MANY ISRAELIS THAT CONGRESS WILL NOT PERMIT THE ADMINISTRATION TO "PRESSURE" ISRAEL AND THAT THE ONUS IS NOW ON PRESIDENT SADAT TO MAKE NEW CONCESSIONS. THOUGH MORE THOUGHTFUL ISRAELIS REALIZE THAT THE SENATORS' LETTER IS NOT THE LAST WORD, THEY BELIEVE IT DEFINITELY PUTS ISRAEL AHEAD OF THIS ADMINISTRATION ON POINTS IN THE LATE ROUNDS OF OUR REASSESSMENT.

3. RABIN'S DETERMINATION NOT TO OFFER NEW IDEAS DURING THIS VISIT, AND TO INSIST THAT IT IS UP TO EGYPT TO MAKE THE MOVES NECESSARY FOR THE REVIVAL OF AN INTERIM AGREEMENT NEGOTIATION, WAS UNDERWRITTEN BY HIS PARTY DURING A LATE-MAY DEBATE AMONG ITS LEADERS ON ISRAEL'S APPROACH TO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

4. THE PROXIMATE CAUSE OF THE DEBATE WAS FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER ABBA EBAN'S OUTSPOKEN CRITICISM IN EARLY MAY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS, PARTICULARLY HIS PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT ISRAEL WAS TO BLAME FOR THE SUSPENSION OF THE MARCH TALKS. THE FOCUS OF THE DEBATE WAS A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THOSE WHO BELIEVE ISRAEL SHOULD MOVE RAPIDLY TOWARD THE FORMULATION OF ITS OWN POSITION FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT AND THOSE WHO INSIST THAT THE REVIVAL OF THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH IS THE BEST COURSE. EBAN, FORMER FINANCE MINISTER AND PARTY BOSS SAPIR, AND MEMBERS OF THE LABOR ALIGNMENT'S JUNIOR PARTNER ESPOUSE THE FORMER COURSE, WHILE A SOLID MAJORITY OF THE ALIGNMENT'S MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SUPPORT RABIN, ALLON, AND PERES IN THEIR DESIRE TO MOVE ONLY TOWARD AN INTERIM STEP WITH EGYPT.
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5. THE REAL DEBATE IN ISRAEL SEEMS TO BE LESS ABOUT THE MEANS OF ACHIEVING PEACE THAN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF REACHING A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. WE HEAR OF LATE MORE STATEMENTS FROM LEADERS SUCH AS PERES, DAYAN, AND RABIN THAT THE ARABS ARE NOT READY FOR "REAL" PEACE; THEY TEND TO DOWNGRADE ANY INDICATIONS TO THE CONTRARY IN THE ARAB WORLD, SUCH AS SYRIA'S AGREEMENT TO THE RENEWAL OF UNDOF FOR SIX MONTHS. INDEED, THERE SEEMS TO BE A TENDENCY TO EXAGGERATE ARAB STATEMENTS OR ACTIONS WHICH "PROVE" THEIR POINT OF VIEW. THESE ISRAELIS, AND THEY SEEM TO BE IN THE VAST MAJORITY, ARE TALKING THEMSELVES INTO A "PEACE-

IS-NOT-POSSIBLE" MOOD.

6. EBAN, AND THE MINORITY WHO SHARE AT LEAST HIS BASIC APPROACH, CONSIDER THAT THERE IS AT LEAST A REMOTE POSSIBILITY OF NOW ACHIEVING A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AGREEMENT, WHILE GRANTING IT WOULD ENTAIL HIGH RISKS FOR ISRAEL, AND WANT ISRAEL TO TEST ARAB INTENTIONS BY MAKING SERIOUS AND FAR-REACHING ISRAELI PROPOSALS. PERHAPS STILL MORE IMPORTANT TO THIS GROUP OF ISRAELIS IS THEIR CONVICTION THAT ISRAEL MUST BE SEEN BY THE WORLD AS GENUINELY WILLING TO TRY FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, AS OTHERWISE ISRAEL'S SUPPORT FROM OUTSIDE THE REGION WILL FURTHER ERODE.

7. AFTER HOLDING SESSIONS ON MAY 13, 20, AND 26, ISRAEL'S LABOR ALIGNMENT DISCONTINUED ITS DEBATE OVER THE ISSUE OF THE COUNTRY'S APPROACH TO MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE OF THE PROXIMITY OF YOUR MEETINGS WITH SADAT AND RABIN AND A CONSENSUS THAT THE NATION SHOULD DRAW ITS RANKS TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF RABIN AS HE GOES TO WASHINGTON. DESPITE THIS INTERRUPTION IN THE PARTY'S FORMAL DEBATE AND DESPITE THE VIEW OF MOST ISRAELIS THAT THE 76 SENATORS' LETTER HAS VINDICATED RABIN IN HIS APPROACH, THE FACT THAT ISRAEL'S DOVES FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE 1973 WAR WERE PREPARED AS A GROUP TO STAND UP IN MAY AND BE COUNTED WAS A HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT FROM THE US VIEWPOINT. UNDER THE CONDITIONS
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OF ANOTHER PERIOD OF SUSTAINED LOW-KEY U.S. CRITICISM OF STAND-PAT ISRAELI POLICIES COMBINED WITH AN ABSENCE DURING THE PERIOD OF BELLICOSE ARAB RHETORIC, IT MAY WELL HAPPEN AGAIN.

8. THE FACT NEVERTHELESS REMAINS THAT RABIN HIMSELF AND HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES WERE STRENGTHENED BY THE DEBATE. RABIN'S SPEECH ENDING THE DEBATE PROBABLY REVEALED THE OUTLINES OF THE APPROACH HE INTENDS TO TAKE WITH YOU HERE. OF HIS MEETING WITH YOU, RABIN SAID HE HOPED TO REACH A "GENERAL UNDERSTANDING WITH THE US" AND THAT, IN ANY CASE, WE ARE IN A PROCESS OF A DIALOGUE IN WHICH ISRAEL IS NOT WEAK. RABIN SAID "THIS IS BECAUSE WE HAVE PROVED BOTH A WILLINGNESS TO ADVANCE TOWARD A SETTLEMENT AND AN ABILITY TO SAY NO TO ARAB DICTATES AND PERHAPS ALSO TO US INFLUENCE." RABIN, AS IN ALL HIS RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS, WAS CAREFUL TO SAY THAT ANOTHER INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT WOULD BE ONLY A STEP TOWARD A FINAL SETTLEMENT. BUT HIS DISBELIEF IN THE POSSIBILITY OF AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT CAME THROUGH CLEARLY, AND HE GAVE STRONG EMPHASIS TO THE THEME THAT THE ONLY APPROACH

IS BY INTERIM AGREEMENTS, PRIMARILY WITH EGYPT.

9. CONCERNING AN INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT, RABIN SAID HE IS "CONVINCED THAT ISRAEL MUST NOT AGREE TO AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE EXISTING EGYPTIAN PROPOSALS." HE SAID THAT IF EGYPT WOULD CHANGE ITS POSITIONS ON THE KEY ISSUES --ABOVE ALL, DURATION OF THE AGREEMENT AND "INITIAL SIGNS ON PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE"--ISRAEL, TOO, WOULD RE-EXAMINE ITS POSITIONS. THOUGH RABIN SAID HE WOULD NOT DRAW MAPS OF THE FINAL BORDERS ISRAEL WOULD LIKE, HE SAID THOSE BORDERS MUST REFLECT CERTAIN "PRINCIPLES": FURTHER DEPTH IN THE SINAI, BEYOND THE OLD BORDER, CONTROL IN SHARM EL-SHEIKH AND TERRITORIAL CONTINUITY TO IT, NO DESCENT FROM THE GOLAN, THOUGH THE WIDTH OF TERRITORY TO BE RETAINED HAS NOT BEEN SET, AND, WITH JORDAN, SOMETHING AKIN TO THE ALLON PLAN IN WHICH ISRAEL WOULD RETAIN SECURITY CONTROL OF THE JORDAN VALLEY AND ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS WOULD REMAIN IN AREAS RETURNED TO JORDAN.

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10. RABIN'S VIEWS REFLECT AND, INCREASINGLY, LEAD MAJORITY OPINION IN ISRAEL, AND RABIN CLEARLY FEELS HE WILL BE TALKING WITH YOU FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH NOT ONLY AT HOME BUT HERE IN THE U.S. ALL ISRAELIS DOUBT THAT THE ARABS WANT REAL PEACE--BY WHICH MOST ISRAELIS MEAN SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO US-CANADIAN RELATIONS--AND A MAJORITY ARE AGAINST ISRAEL'S OFFERING TO GIVE UP MUCH FOR THE SMALL BITS AND PIECES OF NORMALIZATION OF ARAB-ISRAELI RELATIONS WHICH THEY FEEL ARE ALL THE ARABS HAVE OFFERED. THOUGH RABIN AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE CONVINCED THAT A STALEMATE NOW PROBABLY WOULD LEAD TO WAR AND IS THEREFORE UNDESIRABLE, THEY ALSO SEEM TO HAVE SET THEIR MINDS ON NO MORE THAN ANOTHER AGREEMENT IN SINAI WHICH WOULD HAVE A 3-5 YEAR DURATION.

11. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS A GROWING TENDENCY AMONG ISRAELI GOVERNMENT LEADERS TO ATTRIBUTE THE BREAKDOWN OF THE MARCH NEGOTIATIONS SOLELY TO A DISAGREEMENT OVER THE DURATION OF THE AGREEMENT AND TO SPEAK OF NOW REVIVING THE NEGOTIATION OF AN INTERIM AGREEMENT AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PURSUIT OF A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, RATHER THAN MERELY A FIRST STEP TOWARD DOING THE LATTER. FROM THIS IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT RABIN'S OBJECTIVE IS AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE U.S. THAT ISRAEL, DURING THE THREE TO FIVE YEAR DURATION TO BE SOUGHT FOR A NEW AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT, WILL NOT BE CALLED UPON TO NEGOTIATE FURTHER WITHDRAWALS WITH ANY OF ITS NEIGHBORS. INGERSOLL

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